



August 2006

Welcome to the twenty-first edition of the **MassGIS GISette**, a bi-monthly newsletter e-mailed to over 1100 of our users and partner agencies to keep them informed of data updates, GIS events, and on-going technology developments. This newsletter will not replace more focused e-mails that many of you currently receive. A page on our website has been created for the [GISette](#). There you will find back issues of the GISette and an [online subscription form](#).

While our primary intent in publishing the GISette is to disseminate information related to MassGIS initiatives and data development in particular, we also see the GISette as a means of communicating public agency GIS news. So we encourage readers to send in updates or announcements concerning public agencies that they would like included in the GISette. We particularly want to encourage submission of announcements concerning data development projects. Announcements should be sent to Paul Nutting at paul.nutting@state.ma.us.

MassGIS Advisory Committee Name Change

In this article we review the history of how the Statewide Geographic Information Advisory Committee came about and present its new name and expanded role. We think this name change will eliminate some confusion while creating a more streamlined function that also more closely resembles one found in other states.

In keeping with a provision of MassGIS' legislative mandate, the Statewide Geographic Information Advisory Committee was officially established in 2001. The Legislature did not provide guidance on the membership of the advisory committee; they also did not specify how the group's members would be appointed. Based on language concerning membership in the advisory committee from a draft version of the final legislation, the members of the original advisory committee were appointed in January 2001 by then Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Bob Durand. This is a list of current active participants in the [Committee, or their successors](#). The Committee has since advised MassGIS staff that, particularly since its meetings are public anyway, it is in the best interests of geospatial coordination in Massachusetts if the meetings are open to all who want to be more fully engaged in geospatial developments in Massachusetts.

In the early 1990s, a group called the Massachusetts Geographic Information Council (MGIC) started meeting. Attendees at MGIC meetings came from a variety of public and private professional affiliations. The group was formed partly to provide educational and networking opportunities and partly to work towards establishing state-level coordination of GIS activities. Through MGIC there was also an attempt to revive the State Mapping Advisory Committee, which historically had advised the U.S. Geological Survey on state priorities for USGS' mapping work. For a time MGIC was a quasi-formal professional association. It had "governing guidelines" and if you paid a small fee ("dues"), you received announcements concerning the group's events. At this time, MGIC meetings typically included some sort of educational presentation followed by a business meeting. Over time, the activities of the group waned. Subsequently, MassGIS revived the meetings with a focus on educational presentations and networking. Thus the seminar series referred to as "MGIC meetings" is the remnant activity of the

original MGIC meetings that took place in the early 1990s.

Since the creation of the Statewide Geographic Information Advisory Committee, there has been ongoing confusion between its role and that played by MGIC. In other states there are quasi formal "geographic information councils" that serve an advisory role to organizations that have responsibilities equivalent to those of MassGIS. Last spring, MassGIS staff proposed to the Advisory Committee that they be renamed the Massachusetts Geographic Information Council (MGIC). The educational and networking function that had been referred to as "MGIC" would continue as an activity of a MGIC sub-committee on education and outreach and be referred to as the "MGIC Seminar Series". After discussion, the Advisory Committee agreed that this would be a helpful change. In addition, other state-level advisory committees, such as the Statewide Mapping Advisory Committee that advises the State Geologist, and the state agency GIS user group, CommGIS, will become sub-groups or committees of the MGIC.

2005 1:5,000 Color Ortho Imagery Update

MassGIS is pleased to announce that both MrSID and JPEG 2000 versions of the data are now available for free download. These files are tiled using the same orthoquad (OQ) index used for our other image datasets. The MrSID images contain 3 bands (RGB), and the lossy JPEG 2000 files provide four bands (RGB and near infrared). In addition, regional MrSID mosaics may be ordered [from our online order form](#).

Updated Template Parcel Mapping RFP

MassGIS has updated the Template Parcel Mapping RFP. The revised version is more easily edited to quickly turn it into a specification for a parcel mapping procurement. The template can be found [here](#).

Expanded Information on Public Records Law

MassGIS has added additional information to its web page on the public records law. The additions include a short presentation by Assistant Director Neil MacGaffey that highlights key provisions of the public records law and how the law affects responses to request for GIS data. Please visit the revised [web page](#).

Database Updates

- **New [Public School Districts](#) Layers** - 8/29/2006
These three layers represent the public school districts for the state's elementary, middle, and high schools. The datasets were developed by MassGIS using data provided from the Mass. Department of Education.
- **New [MEPA ENF Project Sites](#) Layer** - 8/9/2006
This series of point layers represent the location of Environmental Notification Form (ENF) projects submitted to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).
- **New [Lighthouses](#) Layer** - 7/20/2006
This new point layer, developed by the Mass. Office of Coastal Zone Management, contains the location of all 58 extant lighthouses along the coast of Massachusetts.
- **C21e Layer Updated** - 8/8/2006
DEP GIS Group has updated the [Tier Classified Chapter 21E Sites](#) datalayer. The update included: 38 sites added and 60 removed.

- [MassDEP Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites with Activity and Use Limitations \(AUL\) Layer Updated - 8/8/2006](#)
Updates made by MassDEP included 10 added sites.
- [Title 5 Layer Updated - 8/8/06](#)
Tiles for all watersheds on the ftp site were replaced with new data as the Title 5 layer was modified to include intermittent streams within Zone C's.

Online Mapping

Aleda Freeman has been very busy assisting in the creation of several browser-based mapping applications using data from other entities.

State House Municipal Flag Viewer

The simplest of these was done for the [Bureau of State Office Buildings](#) and is named the [Great Hall Municipal Flag Viewer](#). Great Hall contains the official flags for most of Massachusetts' municipalities. After clicking on a town with the hyperlink tool, the viewer will see an image of the flag for that town in a pop-up window (you'll need to set your browser to allow pop-ups).

Coastal Public Access Sites Locator

In cooperation with our [Executive Office of Environmental Affairs \(EOEA\)](#) colleagues at [Coastal Zone Management \(CZM\)](#), we have developed a [Coastal Public Access Sites](#) viewer. CZM has completed a statewide inventory of all publicly accessible waterfront properties owned by government agencies and non-profit land conservation organizations. The database contains data about over 1,000 beaches, parks, conservation areas, and ways to the sea. The viewer displays maps and site-specific information, a useful tool for prospective visitors to the Massachusetts coastline.

MassGIS Butterfly Atlas Viewer

From 1986 to 1990, hundreds of volunteer butterfly enthusiasts spent thousands of hours in the field in an effort to record the distribution of Massachusetts butterflies, the first systematic statewide butterfly atlas to be undertaken in North America. Until recently, this data existed only in a tabular format, with some static maps on the [Massachusetts Audubon Website](#). MassGIS has partnered with Mass Audubon to allow you to interactively create your own maps using the [MassGIS Butterfly Atlas Viewer](#). To map all or a portion of the state, identify all species found in a survey block during the Atlas period, and overlay butterfly distribution on road, land use and aerial photograph backgrounds.

Open Space Corner

Farewell OpenSpace users!

This is my last OS Corner as I am leaving MassGIS and moving to new job in New Jersey. Thank you for all your help and support over the last six years as I strived to improve the Protected and Recreational OpenSpace datalayer. It has not been a simple task, but certainly a worthwhile one. Let's look at how OpenSpace has changed over the years.

1994: 15,000 polygons for all OpenSpace and Chapter 61 lands
OpenSpace changed from a statewide coverage tiled by counties to town-level tiles in order to accommodate the massive update that was taking place to update the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) report. Updates were made by interns (like yours truly), taking 1:25,000 scale basemaps on which volunteers had compiled the town's OpenSpace and entering the information using a digitizer (spatial) and custom AMLs (attributes). Ah, the fond memories of editing some linework on an ancient Tektronics USGS surplus terminal with no mouse (X and Y axis wheels only) and hitting on an old Vax machine. With no orthoimagery, there was not much in the way of

ground-truthing new OpenSpace.

2001: 28,291 polygons of OpenSpace comprising 1,185,017 acres

8,058 polygons of Chapter 61 lands comprising 313,181 acres

When I started as OpenSpace Administrator, the same basic system was in place. With the advent of SDE and versioned editing, the goal was to move OpenSpace from coverage to GeoDatabase. This was quite tricky, but eventually led to the new OpenSpace schema and versioned editing. The process of moving the coverage model into a GDB was much more complicated than it seemed.

2006: 32,365 polygons of OpenSpace comprising 1,306,542 acres

8,178 polygons of Chapter 61 land comprising 291,949 acres

159,292 arcs bounding those polygons

OpenSpace is in good condition and updates are much easier to add. Many of the older polygons have been revisited with either new parcel data, new orthoimagery or both.

I hope that all this hard work gets put to use and improved even more over the coming years.

OpenSpace would be nowhere without the help and support of the entire Massachusetts conservation community. Thanks again for all your help over the years.

Keep preserving (and mapping) the open spaces of Massachusetts!

Scott Costello, MassGIS Open Space Coordinator "emeritus".

Events, Announcements and Staffing

MGIC Seminar Series

On September 28, 2006 from 10AM to Noon in Minehan Hall in the [Hurley Building](#) at 25 Staniford Street, Boston, we will resume our schedule of the seminar series with a topic of [The FEMA Flood Map Modernization Program](#). Considering the dynamic nature of nature, and with the advent of more sophisticated elevation models and other technological advances, more accurate and modern, maps of areas likely to be inundated in flood situations are being created for FEMA. The Massachusetts [Department of Conservation and Recreation \(DCR\)](#) is the State agency charged with assisting in this effort. Chris Penney, of DCR's Flood Hazard Management Program, will moderate this timely seminar. The project team also includes several consultants from CDM, ENSR, and Watershed Concepts, who will each address a different aspect of the multi-year process. A more complete announcement will soon be posted on the website and [emailed to the list](#).

2006 GIS DAY

MassGIS has reserved Great Hall at the Massachusetts State House for our 8th annual GIS Day Exhibition. Our event will occur on Thursday, November 16th, 2006 from 10AM to 2PM (note: ours is the day following the official date of Nov 15). As in the past, we will have live demonstrations, a map gallery and potentially a noontime speaking event. If you would like to participate in some fashion, please contact [Paul Nutting](#), 617-626-1238

Staff Changes

Last month, two MassGIS staff moved on and this month we lose another.

Shalini Sen worked on the Water Budgets project and her short term contract expired in June. We thank her for her contributions and wish her well in future professional opportunities. Greg Booma was at MassGIS for a very short time, where he was updating the Navteq roads data; he left for an opportunity in the private sector.

Long time staff member, OpenSpace Database Manager, and GISette columnist, Scott Costello is moving away from New England, and thus leaving MassGIS. We will miss his tremendous expertise, unfailing good humor, even temperament, and willingness to help on tasks large and small. Good Luck Scott!

Any comments or suggestions about the GISette are welcomed paul.nutting@state.ma.us.

MassGIS-The Commonwealth's Office of Geographic and Environmental Information is located within the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and is charged with the collection, enhancement, storage and dissemination of the Commonwealth's geographic data.

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